

USDA Pathways Programs Cheat Sheet



- As you may know, President Obama signed Executive Order 13562 on December 27, 2010 which established the Pathways Programs for students and recent graduates. Effective July 10, 2012, the Pathways Programs replaced the SCEP and STEP programs.
- There are 5 core principles that define the basic requirements of the program.
- Transparency is a major principle of the Pathways Program. Therefore, the Pathways regulation requires federal agencies to post all internship opportunities on USAJOBS. All interested applicants must apply competitively to the vacancies that interest them. The public notice requirement is also applicable to our attendance at career and recruitment fairs.
- The Pathways Programs must maintain a limited scope. Therefore, USDA's workforce planning is a necessity. All projected intern hires will be reported in the USDA's Annual Human Capital Management Report.
- Another principle is not a new feature of the federal government's hiring practices. Veterans Preference is now applicable to every intern job opportunity under the Pathways Programs. The Pathways regulation requires agencies to provide OPM with a pass over request in the event a veteran is passed-over for an internship under the Pathways Programs.
- The fourth core principle is agency investment. This principle supports training and career development for Pathways interns. Professional development, training, mentoring, and the development of an Individual Development Plan are all very important features of the program.
- The fifth and final core principle is OPM oversight. As a result, OPM may place a cap on the number of interns that may be converted to career or career-conditional appointments. Moreover, OPM will be given the authority to terminate, suspend, or revoke USDA's privileges to hire interns under the Pathways Programs.

- The USDA Pathways Memorandum of Understanding has been approved by OPM. USDA's Pathways Memorandum of Understanding will be re-executed every two years. The MOU outlines the roles and responsibilities of USDA and OPM.
- There are three unique programs that fall under the umbrella of the Pathways Programs. The Internship Program enables agencies to hire students who are currently enrolled in an accredited educational institution at least part-time. Each student trainee may be non-competitively converted to a career- conditional appointment after completing 640 hours of work experience and program requirements.
- The Recent Graduates Program is a new program and is open to individuals who have graduated from a qualifying educational institution within 2 years. Veterans have up to 6 years to apply to the Recent Graduates Program after graduating from a qualifying educational institution. Each Recent Graduate participant may also be non-competitively converted to a temporary, career- conditional, or career appointment after 1-year of successful job performance and program completion.
- The Presidential Management Fellows Program is an existing program that now falls under Pathways. It is still sponsored by the Office of Personnel Management and is for individuals who hold advanced degrees such as a law degree, master's degree, or doctoral degree. The PMF Program has changed slightly. Prospective PMF's have 2 years to apply to the program after their official graduation date. OPM is responsible for applying veteran's preference and other program requirements to the selection process. In addition, USDA will recruit and select PMF's from an OPM approved list of qualified candidates.
- USDA Student Coordinators and Recruiters may continue to participate in career fairs and recruitment events as long as the career fair is posted publically. All materials shared with prospective interns must be shared with everyone at the fair. Student Coordinators and Recruiters who participate in career fairs are not authorized to collect resumes. Under the Pathways regulation, Student Coordinators and Recruiters who participate in Career Fairs are directed to advise interested applicants to apply on USAJobs.
- In an effort to keep all stakeholders involved and informed, the Virtual University has developed a Cross agency workgroup. We call this workgroup the USDA Pathways Advisory Council, made up of HR representatives across USDA. We meet on a bi-weekly basis to discuss the transition period and the implementation of the program. The Virtual University has also hosted 11 webinars and has trained over 1200 HR Specialists, Recruiters, Interns, and Student Coordinators combined.
- Training and mentoring opportunities are highlights and requirements for the new Pathways Programs. AgLearn will be a vital tool in providing professional development opportunities for Pathways participants. All Pathways participants must adhere to the

USDA Pathways Training Plan. A copy of the training plan can be found by clicking the resources link on www.usda.gov.

- In conclusion, the Virtual University has provided USDA's HR Community as well as USDA's Union representatives with Frequently Asked Questions, Fact Sheets, and Informational Emails and will continue to provide guidance and training on the USDA Pathways Programs.